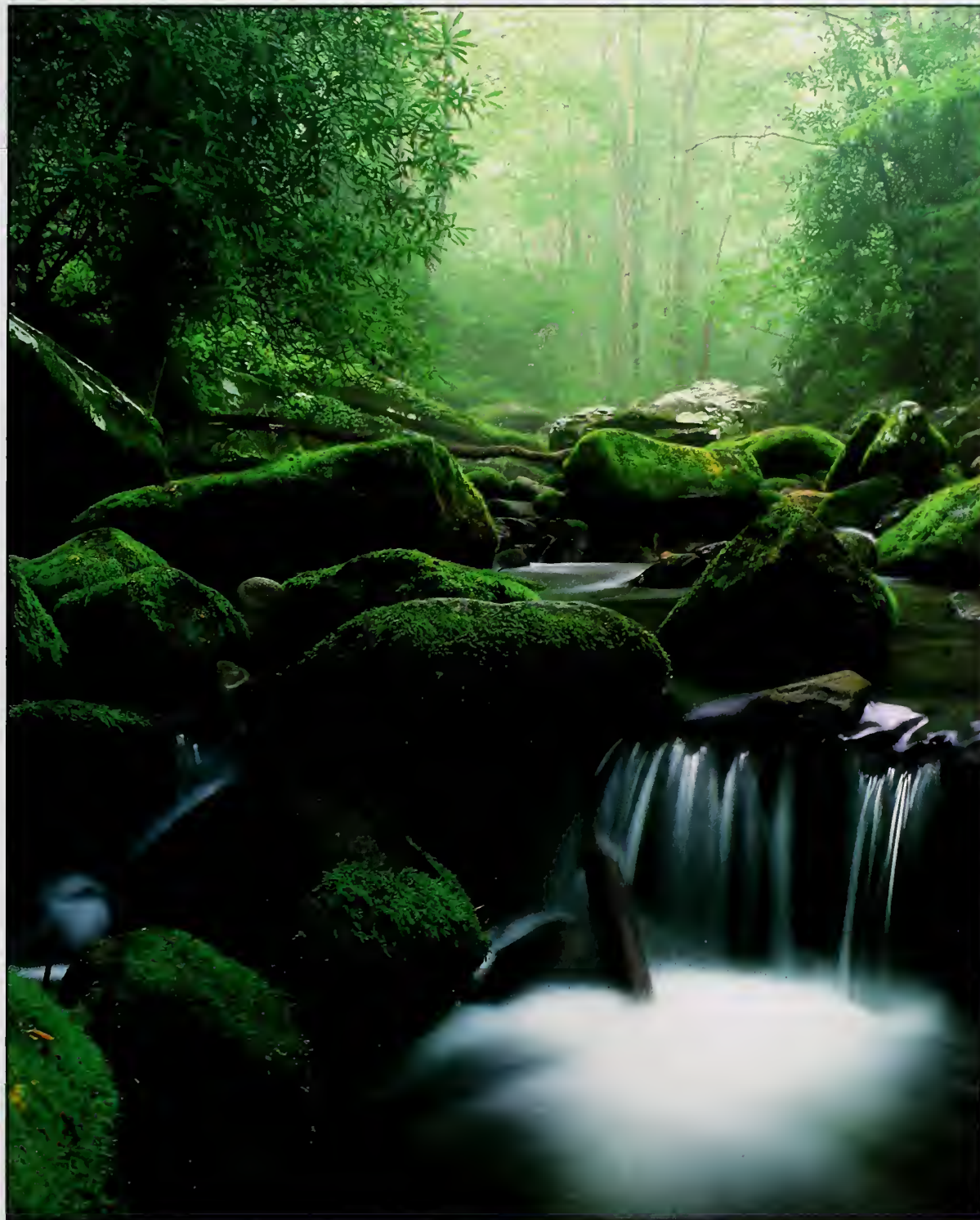


VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

AUGUST 1990

ONE DOLLAR



Editor's page

"All knowledge starts out as heresy."

—Amory Lovins

Maybe all we need is a good coach. After all, in any scary situation, it's always much more comforting to have someone there to hold your hand before telling you to get on with it. I know about these things, because when I get on a diving board and I look down into the water, I panic. I refuse to budge unless I have someone with great knowledge and very little patience coaxing me to *attempt* something more than just an embarrassing jump. Me, the self-confident veteran swim instructor of 10 years needs a coach to tell me: "No problem. I swear you can do it. Done it myself before and I'm telling you it's a piece of cake. Now, go!" And then I do it. Without thinking, without worrying, without turning tail or believing that I'll try it tomorrow instead.

I read recently in the newspaper that some are predicting as many as 28,000 jobs in the timber industry will be lost as a result of the recent U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announcement to list the spotted owl as a threatened species. Some lawmakers, mortified by these dire figures, are reportedly looking into a way to authorize federal action otherwise prohibited by the Endangered Species Act. The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* reported one forest industry president as saying: "We are not going to allow a decision that adversely

affects thousands of families to go forward unchallenged."

People are getting pretty upset about the whole thing. Now, the people *did* authorize the Endangered Species Act (after all, we are a government of the people), but when you talk about 28,000 jobs out the window, people like to be able to have the opportunity to change their minds. Of course, in the same newspaper, I read about 465 people in Elkton, Orange and Shenandoah, Virginia being put out of work by the closing of three Wrangler plants, and I wondered who was out there trying to stop that from happening. The Wrangler representative reportedly said: "Every effort will be made to assist employees in finding other jobs, and severance arrangements will be made."

My mother and I were discussing the value of history the other day. "History shows you the mistakes," she declared, "and hopefully you'll have sense enough to avoid them next time around." Coward that I am, I think history also gives a bit of comfort. If you take the time to review it, you find that life got on quite nicely before BMWs, air conditioning and day care. Neither has it always been wracked with the abuse of drugs and alcohol and tormented teenagers. History shows you that life doesn't lose its richness when it pulls a fast one on you, even if it's almost unbearable to contemplate what'll happen if life actually *does*

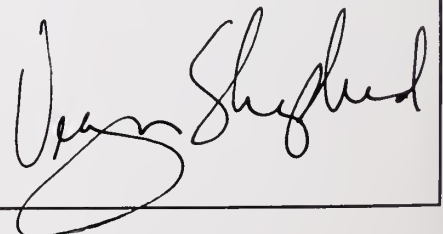
turn you upside down, bringing sorrow and pain.

I fear, however, that some hard-nosed, flea-bitten old coach would view the issue of adapting your life to accomodate change differently. I can just hear some wise old voice shaking his head in disbelief at the recent events of the day: "So, what is it—are you telling me you lack the adaptability, the creativity, the courage to *do something else with your life?* Stop acting like some kind of insect that needs a generation to react!"

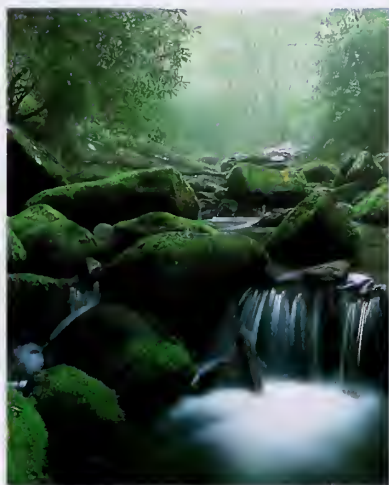
People are scrambling, though, holding onto the diving board for dear life, looking into what they've convinced themselves is the abyss of certain death if they have to jump. We all have a hard time believing in ourselves anymore.

In summers past, I could trick most any kid into swimming by using make-believe fish who talked to them underwater, and tea parties on the bottom of the pool. They'd tumble into the pool head-first if you played upon their sunny belief that anything was possible. The ones I dreaded were the kids who crossed their arms and wouldn't budge—telling me in stern little voices that they were quite sure that they *were* going to drown if you made them get into the water. These little know-it-alls were the ones I worried about. It's too bad I never figured out how to convince them to just take a deep breath and dive on in.

Well, a good coach is hard to find. □



VIRGINIA WILDLIFE



Osprey; photo by Lynda Richardson, see story p. 10

Front and Back Cover

This month, *Virginia Wildlife* takes a look at how local citizens are taking responsibility for the health and quality of their rivers; see page 4 for details. Back cover: Take to the mountains this summer for relief; see page 27 for more; photos by William Lea.

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South Fork of the Shenandoah River; photo by Bruce Ingram.

by Nancy Hugo

The Friends of the Shenandoah River are part of a growing number of local people who have taken responsibility for the quality of their environment—and it's working.

Thurman Shepherd said to meet him at the intersection of Rt. 340 and Rt. 55 in Front Royal. I'd see the sign "Friends of the Shenandoah River" outside the building that was their headquarters, he said.

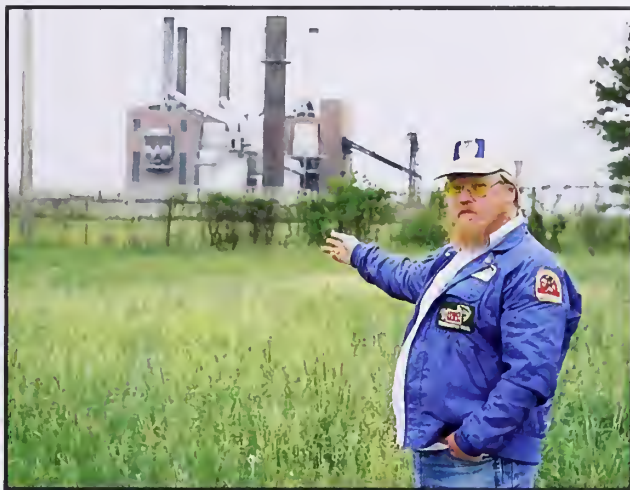
What with a sign, a headquarters, and a man available to talk to a reporter all day, Friends of the Shenandoah River must be rich. Wealthy landowners, I figured, armchair conservationists with time on their hands.

When the bearded Shepherd hopped out of his Isuzu truck, I knew my preconceptions were in trouble. "Red Man Tournament Trail," "Bass Anglers Sportsman's Society," and "Charter Member North American Hunting Club" read three of the patches arranged like merit badges on his windbreaker. Bumble Bee Bait Company Lures, NRA, and National Wildlife Federation proclaimed the decals on his truck. And, in case anyone failed to get the message, BAKLASH drove the message home on his license plate.

"Huntin' and fishin', that's all I do," says the amiable 35-year-old Shepherd. Well, not quite all. He was taking a half day's vacation from his job as a sales representative at Clark Fork Lift (an afternoon he might have spent fishing) to show me the river he loves and the organization he's joined to fight to save it.

"Everything you see here we begged off somebody," says Shepherd as we walk into the organization's rent-free headquarters, a former real estate office with donated furniture, donated office equipment, and donated refrigerator (complete with a "It needs a good cleaning, but it works" note taped to its door).

"These cost about \$240 each," explains Shepherd, pointing to the kits volunteers use to monitor pollutants in the Shenandoah River. "We've bought five, but we need 30 or 40 to cover the whole river." Shepherd is optimistic that they'll get them. Not only is Warren County



Thurman Shepherd, founding member of Friends of the Shenandoah River, points to the Avtex plant in Front Royal, the PCB polluter that brought sportsmen and other river lovers together to form the activist group to clean up the Shenandoah River; photo by Pels.

looking favorably at Friends of the Shenandoah's request for \$5,000 to help equip volunteers to monitor the river, but the organization's history also suggests it knows how to get what it needs.

"Danny Sealock could beg \$1 off the poorest man in town," says Shepherd in one of many references to the 51-year-old construction worker who organized Friends of the Shenandoah and serves as its current president. "He's a rough old character," says Shepherd, "but he knows how to get a point across to somebody. He knows everybody in town, and he's not proud. He'll ask 'em for anything. He'll do anything when it comes to that river."

What prompted Sealock, a snuff-dipping sportsman, to found an environmental organization? "People were messin' with his river," says Shepherd.

The people "messin' with" Sealock's river were, among others, the notorious Avtex fibers plant, Virginia's largest polluter. For 50 years the people of Front Royal had lived with the byproducts of the plant's rayon production, a process which pumped pollutants into the air and water. "A blind man could have drove into this town and known exactly where he was at. The smell was that bad," says Shepherd.

Fish kills, air pollution, and groundwater contamination were the price Front Royal residents paid for its largest employer. "We've got to eat first, we'll die second," one employee was quoted as saying as talk of the possible closing of the plant escalated. Lawsuits and civil penalties against the company mounted in 1988 as the state made an attempt to bring Avtex into compliance with the state's pollution laws. But the plant was still operating in defiance of state law when EPA figures released in 1989 showed that Avtex was the state's largest polluter and the second biggest air polluter in the country. In

1987 alone, according to the EPA figures, more than 80 million pounds of toxic chemicals flowed into the South Fork of the Shenandoah River from the Avtex plant.

But it was neither the EPA figures nor the lawsuits filed by the Attorney General's office that prompted Danny Sealock to action. It was a statement issued by the state Health Department in May of 1989 warning against eating fish caught in the Shenandoah River. According to the Health Department, for 60 miles downstream of the Avtex plant, the river's sediment and fish were contaminated with cancer-causing polychlorinated biphenyls known as PCB's. The use of PCB's once common in electrical transformers and transmission fluids, has been banned since the 1970s, but the compound persists in the environment and was found in high concentrations in the soil and storm drains on Avtex's riverfront property. Sunfish taken downstream of the Avtex plant's discharge points showed levels of PCB's five times the federal action level of two parts per million; bottom-feeding carp showed levels 50 times the federal maximum. Eating the fish in the affected area, according to the Health Department, could result in "an increased lifetime risk of cancer proportional to the fish tissue concentration and the amount of fish consumed." Sealock was to

learn later that tests had indicated high concentrations of PCB's in the flesh of fish as early as July of 1987, but because of "crowded state laboratories," it took nearly two years for the state to warn people to stop eating the fish.

For Danny Sealock, who heard the news as he was taking his wife and granddaughter fishing, this was the last straw. A week after the warning from the Health Department, he bought an ad in the *Northern Virginia Daily* announcing that he was holding a meeting. He rented the town Fire Hall for the June 6 meeting with \$75 of his own money.

Thurman Shepherd, who had never before attended a political meeting, learned of the meeting one afternoon when he'd stopped to fish along the Shenandoah on his way home from work.

"A guy came down the riverbank and handed me a flyer," he says.

"You seen this yet?" the stranger asked.

The flyer explained that sportsmen and fishermen fed up with pollution of the Shenandoah were going to get together to do something about cleaning up the river.

"I said 'Well, it needs it bad enough,'" recalls Shepherd who had grown tired of pulling deformed fish out of the Shenandoah long before the Health Department warning was issued.

"I ran off 100 copies of the flyer," says Shepherd. "I took them to bait shops, canoe stores, sporting goods stores, grocery stores near take-outs, anywhere that had anything to do with the river. I figured that was the best way to get a hold of fishermen and people interested in the river. Three hundred people showed up at our first meeting."

It may have been closer to 175 who showed up at that initial meeting, but there was enthusiasm enough for 300. As outrage over the pollution attributed to the Avtex plant grew, so did the membership in Friends of the Shenandoah, although members of the organization insisted they were never out to shut the plant down.



The Friends of the Shenandoah River keep an eye on the quality of their river by regularly monitoring its water quality and staying alert for potential pollution problems. Left: Danny Sealock, President of the Friends of the Shenandoah River. Right: Amy K. Pratt, member of Friends of the Shenandoah River and professional environmental specialist with the Upper Occoquan Sewage Authority; photo by Pels.

"We have members of the Board who were worried Avtex employees might cause them problems, like a brick through the window, for a while there," says Shepherd. "But we were never the ones trying to get Avtex closed. That's not what we're about. We're here to try to clean this river up. We just said we couldn't support them until they stopped polluting the river."

In November of 1989, after the state revoked its industrial discharge permit, the Avtex plant closed.

The sight of the idle plant, which occupies 400 acres and has 66 acres of roof, is sobering. A sign on the locked entrance gate now reads:

USEPA
Superfund Project
Danger
No Trespassing
Hazardous
Substance Present

Anyone entering this plant is subject
to search upon leaving.

Across the street are the trailers of the EPA Superfund Removal Project

which is now charged with cleaning up the site. According to EPA on-scene coordinator Kevin Koob, the emergency process of stabilizing the site (ending immediate threats to the community) will cost \$9.23 million. The remedial process of cleaning up toxins in the environment may cost \$30 million and take 30 years.

"Their systems are still full of that stuff," says Shepherd who notes that an overflow from a drainage system during the past week resulted in another toxic discharge from the plant.

According to Shepherd, the Avtex plant was—and is—the Shenandoah's biggest problem, but it's just one problem out of a lot of problems on the river.

"Fifteen or 20 companies on this river are dumping one kind of chemical or another into the river," says Shepherd. Friends of the Shenandoah has approached many of them and intends to approach them all asking, in essence, "Do you want to help us or fight us?" Representatives of



Dr. Meryl N. Christiansen, member of the Friends of the Shenandoah River and professional agricultural consultant, displays a water quality sampling technique which involves analyzing the diversity of aquatic insects attached to rocks in the river; photo by Pels.

Friends of the Shenandoah also speak to civic groups, Boy Scouts, 4-H groups, "anyone who'll listen to us," educating them about river ecology and trying to make new friends for the river.

"We're pushy as hell, I've got to admit it," says Shepherd.

For Shepherd, who has relatives living "on every back road around here," personal involvement with the Shenandoah is nothing new. "Since people been living along this river, there's been Shepherds along here," he says. What's new for Shepherd is the role of political activist.

"I have a high school education," he says. "I don't know what in the world I'm doing on the Board of Directors of a group like this. I said 'no' at first. 'That's for lawyers and people with a good education who knows about this stuff.' Danny [Sealock] said, 'Yeah, but you got an axe to grind.'"

Sealock and the other members of Friends of the Shenandoah who unanimously elected Shepherd to

their board undoubtedly knew not only that Shepherd had an axe to grind over the degradation of the Shenandoah River, but that if degrees were awarded in Shenandoah River lore, Thurman Shepherd would have a Ph.D.

"I hit the river almost every day," says Shepherd. "It's my river as much as anyone else's is the way I figure it. I've fished just about every spot on this river you've ever seen. Been fishin' it since I was 8 or 9, but I've never seen the river the way it is now. When I was a kid, the river was clearer, run deeper year round. Twenty years ago you could dive out of the boat here [near White Horse Rock] and never touch bottom. Now it's 4-6 feet deep. It's mostly siltation from development causing that. The fishin' here's still good, but you pull out a lot of fish with tumors on 'em, deformed. I never pulled out a fish that didn't look great when I was a kid.

"There's carp in here 6 feet long, smallmouth and largemouth bass,

perch, and sunfish. There's catfish in here as long as your leg, but nobody'd want to eat one now that has any sense. I pulled 25 to 30 catfish didn't have any eyes. Catfishin' was a ritual with me and my brother. We went catfishin' every Friday night—'til last year. We didn't want the fish. South of Front Royal is the only place I'd eat a catfish now."

South of Front Royal, Shepherd explains, is upstream of the Avtex plant. "You can confuse somebody bad when you get to talkin' about upriver and down river on a north flowin' river."

As we visit other sights along the Shenandoah, Shepherd's tone vacillates between the sober seriousness of concerned citizen and the unrestrained enthusiasm of a sportsman.

"Now you've got to admit that's a pretty sight," he announces at one overlook. "Now you're really going to wish you had your camera," he effuses at another. At one boat landing he is trying to explain the intricacies of the current, but he's upstaged by the graffiti on the bridge abutment. "Avtex Sucks" read the foot-tall letters.

Friends of the Shenandoah have gathered for their monthly meeting by the time we get back to Front Royal. "We're just country people," explains Shepherd. "Our meetings are real informal."

Present are about 15 of the most active members of the Friends of the Shenandoah. They include a retired plant scientist, a union organizer, a diesel mechanic, a banker, the owner of a canoe company, a retired school teacher, a welder, and a realtor. Presiding is the legendary Danny Sealock, who for all the descriptions I'd heard, reminds me of nothing so much as a Biblical prophet with his clear blue eyes and long curly beard. That he is a carpenter and fisherman fits. That he is wielding a gavel behind a podium doesn't. At least at first it doesn't. Sometimes he forgets the gavel is in his hand and waves it angrily above his head. "The guy told me a baldfaced lie," he's saying as I enter, the gavel waving menacingly above his head. It soon becomes

clear, however, that something is working at this meeting that has nothing to do with Robert's Rules of Order and everything to do with passion, commitment, and political savvy. In less than an hour, with little discussion and less dissension, plans have been made for cleaning up boat landings, for writing letters to state and local officials about water quality issues, for organizing a seminar on the future of the river, for taking water samples and analyzing the results, for organizing a satellite chapter in Luray, and for developing a list of property owners of record along the river. When Sealock strikes the podium with his gavel, it is with the precision of a man used to nailing things down.

"We need someone to serve as a liaison with the EPA people at Avtex," John Gibson comments following a discussion on the need to monitor the progress of the cleanup at the Avtex plant. Bang goes the Sealock gravel. "John Gibson volunteers to be liaison with the cleanup out there!"

"People keep asking me, 'When are we going to be able to keep fish off the river?'" says Dr. Meryl Christiansen, a soft spoken agricultural consultant who has proposed a seminar on the future of the river. Quicker than you can say "panel of experts," Christiansen has been appointed to organize a seminar.

Also nailed down at this meeting are plans for constructing a laboratory in Bill Hipple's basement. It is there that water samples collected by volunteers will be analyzed to provide baseline data on Shenandoah water quality. A plumber has installed donated sinks and OSHA safety showers. He wants a free membership out of it. Weyerhaeuser will be asked to donate lumber for cabinets. Sealock will "put the bug on somebody" for the drywall. Amy Pratt, environmental analyst with the Upper Occoquan Sewage Authority, will train volunteers and provide technical assistance.

Is this laboratory really necessary? Aren't government agencies monitoring water quality and protecting

our rivers from pollutants? To Friends of the Shenandoah, the answer to that question is as close as the polluted Shenandoah River.

"The [Water Control] Board is underfunded and undermanned," says Danny Sealock. "They can't do anything but show up after the damage is done. And when you're talking about chemicals, that usually means a river has been ruined for a generation." Even state officials admit they have neither the time nor the manpower to monitor the river as closely as Friends of the Shenandoah will.

A local perspective also enables Friends of the Shenandoah to prevent some problems before they occur and to respond to others more quickly than a state agency ever could.

"There's a lot of construction going on out Route 614 near the South Fork, and I don't see any sediment control. Somebody needs to ride out there and see what's going on."

"The county's considering a site near the river for the new landfill. People need to scream."

"In my 50 years of experience I've never seen the river this cloudy. Is it muddy up where you are, John? Somebody with enough guts to fight somebody needs to find out where all that siltation is coming from."

"A guy is reclaiming batteries by Shenandoah Farms. Is any of the battery acid reaching the stream?" Monitors will take water samples.

If there is one theme that emerges from this meeting of river friends, it is that local citizens are taking responsibility for local problems. One wonders how we could have ever thought anyone else would. There's also a sense that the struggle will be a long and difficult one and that our rivers will need all the friends they can get.

"As many rivers as there are in the state of Virginia, if everybody knew what was going in 'em—what they were drinking and fishing in, we'd have more support than enough," says Thurman Shepherd, whose optimism is unflagging but who seems a bit worn out by the time we leave this evening meeting. He's been up

since 4:30 a.m., and he still has 40 miles to drive home. Maybe my picture of him as an armchair conservationist wasn't so wrong after all. After a full day of advocacy for the Shenandoah River, he'll need that armchair to collapse into when he gets home. □

Friends of the Shenandoah is just one of dozens of citizen organizations popping up all over Virginia with the purpose of protecting our rivers and streams. They are as different as the volunteers who have joined to form them, but they share a commitment to protecting water quality, instream flow, and the scenic and recreational value of our rivers. Their activities range from chemical analysis of water samples to lobbying legislators and cleaning up litter from boat landings. In the words of Friends of the Middle James, a friend of the river is a canoeist, a historian, a fisherman, a bird-watcher, a nature lover, a businessman, a rocksitter—anyone concerned about the welfare of Virginia's rivers.

They're full of initiative," says Jerry McCarthy, Executive Director of the Virginia Environmental Endowment, the grant-making foundation set up at the encouragement of Judge Robert R. Merhige, Jr. in 1977 with an \$8 million contribution by Allied Chemical, following their contamination of the James River with kepone. "They're doing what everyone needs to be doing: taking responsibility for their part of the environment."

The following list includes some (but not all) of Virginia's river friends.

Friends of the Shenandoah River
P.O. Box 410
Front Royal, VA 22630

Friends of Mason Neck
c/o Elizabeth Hartwell
7968 Bolling Drive
Alexandria, VA 22308

Friends of the Lynchburg Stream Valleys
c/o Leah Gropen
5016 Wedgewood Road
Lynchburg, VA 24503



Left: Friends of the Shenandoah River (from l. to r.: Meryl Christiansen, Amy Pratt, Danny Sealock and Thurman Shepherd) take a break with Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries game warden John King of Warren County, who helps the group obtain the permission of landowners to sample the river from private access points; photo by Pels. Above: North Fork of the Shenandoah River; photo by Ed Jaworowski.

Friends of the Rappahannock
c/o Mrs. Marcia L. Keener
P.O. Box 1093
Fredericksburg, VA 22402

Lower James River Association
c/o Patricia A. Jackson
P.O. Box 110
Richmond, VA 23201

Rappahannock Preservation Society
c/o Robert W. Jensen
P.O. Box 66
Topping, VA 23169

Save the Old Piankatank
c/o Fred L. Williams
P.O. Box 27
Deltaville, VA 23043

FORVA
Friends of the Rivers of Virginia
28-C Main Street
Box 460
Warrenton, VA 22186

Friends of the North Fork of the
Shenandoah
P.O. Box 208
Strasburg, VA 22657

Friends of the Staunton River
c/o J. T. Davis
P.O. Box 280
Brookneal, VA 24528

Friends of the Roanoke River
P.O. Box 1750
Roanoke, VA 24008

Friends of the Middle James
P.O. Box 631
Richmond, VA 23205-0631
*Save Our Streams (SOS)
5531 Bosworth Ave.
Baltimore, MD 21207

*These groups (SOS) are sponsored by the Izaak Walton League. They are active in Virginia—including along the Shenandoah—but their headquarters are in Maryland.

Nancy Hugo is a freelance outdoor writer who lives in Ashland.



Blind Date With The

The secrets of a professional wildlife photographer.

"As the sun came up, I would sit in the blind and wait for the light to be bright enough to shoot, and then prayed for the birds to strike interesting poses."



Wild Angler

Canon T90 camera, 500mm f4.5 lens, no colored filters.

story & photos
by Lynda Richardson

In the spring of 1989, I was asked to photograph a story on ospreys for *National Wildlife* magazine (April/May 1990). With five years experience as a wildlife photographer, I thought I had a pretty good idea of what to expect. I was right. It was a lot of work.

I needed to get photographs of osprey behavior on the nest, and the only way you can get close enough without disturbing the birds is to build a blind. The best time to put an osprey blind up is in February before the raptors return from their wintering grounds in South America, the Caribbean and Florida. Since my assignment with *National Wildlife* magazine had been given to me a little late in the osprey nesting season, the blinds had to be built on occupied nests. This is very tricky and had to be handled with great care. If an osprey is kept off her eggs or chicks too long, the young ones either cook in the sun or freeze in the early morning or late evening.

Fortunately, I had some help. For two years prior to the assignment, Dr. Mitchell Byrd, osprey patron extraordinaire, allowed me to tag along on some of his osprey data collecting trips, putting up with my picture taking and even allowing me to eat some of his lunch when I forgot to bring my own. When I got this assignment, he spent hours showing me nest sites on topographic maps.

Finally settling on Cheatham Annex, a naval supply station on the York River in Williamsburg, my hubby and technical wizard Tim Wright designed the two blinds we put up on the abandoned fuel pier. Without him, I never could have hauled all those heavy 2' x 4's and then put up with the agony of a flattened blind, lost equipment, bad weather and failed strobes. He even sweated through the summer with me in the blind for about 30 days between June 5 and August 5 while I photographed osprey and watched them raise their young.

But, since I'm a photographer, not a writer, I think it would be best to tell you how I photographed the osprey in pictures. As you read the captions and view the photographs, hopefully you will get a better feeling for what it's like to be a wildlife photographer. You need lots of help from lots of people—and even then—it's still a lot of work.



photo by Tim Wright



1



2

Photo 1

Putting the blinds up was a delicate and trying operation. We built the first blind about 150 feet away from the nest site. With wheels attached to the side of the blind closest to the nest, Tim could lift the back end roll it forward unseen by the female osprey shading her chicks. While I stood at a distance with binoculars and watched the female osprey's reaction, Tim moved the blind slowly toward her. We wore radio headsets and I communicated the bird's reaction to his approach. If she appeared agitated, I asked Tim to stop and he would wait until she

appeared quiet again. Then he would quietly lift the back of the blind and slowly begin moving forward again. This took all day. When we finally had the blind in position approximately 23 feet away from the nest, I moved slowly toward the nest until the female flew. We did this as a precaution: If Tim had jumped out and scared the bird suddenly, she might have accidentally knocked a chick out of the nest. Timing ourselves, we removed the wheels, lashed the blind down with rope and dashed off—all in just a few minutes. Then, from a safe distance, we watched with

binoculars to make sure the female would land back on the nest. Soon she returned, but the true test was whether or not the male would accept the blind. If he would not deliver fish, the chicks might starve. Tim and I waited a few more hours until we saw the male deliver a fish to the hungry family. A sigh of relief. The blind was accepted and we wouldn't have to take it down.

Photo 2

This six to eight-day old chick looks very hot in the afternoon sun and his mother had only been off the

nest for two minutes. When photographing young chicks or eggs, you must remember that temperature is not the only danger they face. When you cause an adult to leave its nest you provide a perfect opportunity for predators to dive in for a meal. Another problem is that sometimes chicks may try to move away from you only to fall from the nest and into the water below. It's important to be aware of the consequences of your actions and never stay longer than a few minutes at a nest site. (Canon T-90 35mm camera, 100mm macro lens set at 1/125th at f8.5 using Fujichrome 50 professional film.)



3



3

Photo 3

A remote camera sometimes can give you images you'd never get otherwise. Tim and I clamped a "Bogen Magic Arm" to the pipe beside the nest at the first blind and attached to it a Canon F-1 35 mm camera with motor drive. Shooting with either a 17mm super

wide angle or a 24mm wide angle lens, we could get great shots of the adults bringing food to the nest. A 25-foot remote release, which Tim made with a few parts from Radio Shack and an old film can, triggered the camera from inside the blind. I would preset the remote

camera for maximum depth of field and would only fire it when I knew that there was enough light and the "moment" was right. At day's end, we would remove the camera and place a "dummy" camera, a block of wood spray-painted black, to keep the osprey familiar with the contraption. (Above: Canon 24mm lens set at 1/125th at f11.0 using Fujichrome 50 professional film.)

wanted and then matched the setting on the flash and the camera to achieve it. As the sun came up, I would sit in the blind and wait for the light to be bright enough to shoot, and then prayed for the birds to strike interesting poses. As you might imagine, this was not easy. Usually, the sunrise clouded over, the birds had their backs to the camera, or the flash refused to go off. After trying this shot for a few months without success, I finally got an interesting photograph of a 8½-week-old fledgling landing on the nest with a fish. (Canon 17mm lens at 1/60th at f11.0 using Fujichrome 50 professional film and the fill flash.)

Photo 4 (next page)

Leaving our house around 3:30 a.m. to get to the blind before dawn was routine. We tried to shoot sunrise photographs of the nest using a remote camera and a Vivitar 283 flash placed on separate "Bogen Magic Arms." I decided what depth of field (area of focus) I



4



6



5

Photo 5

While doing research for this assignment, I came across a story on osprey in *National Geographic* magazine. The photographer had placed a large stick near his nest site and photographed the adults as they landed there. I thought such photos would really add to my story, so I decided to give it a try as well. Not only did my adults land on the carefully planted stick, but the fledglings commonly used it as a perch while they tested and strengthened their wings.

(Canon 500mm f4.5 lens set at 1/250th at f5.6 1/2 on Fujichrome 50 professional film.)

Photo 6

During my stay, I observed many interesting interchanges between parents, between parents and young, and between the young themselves. My favorite and the most challenging to photograph was the ritual of giving and receiving a fish; when the male brought a fish to the nest for the female to feed the young. When a male catches a fish, he will sit on a nearby post and eat the head off. Then, he will softly call to the female and she will call back. He flies over, lands on the nest, hands the goods to his mate and takes off, leaving her to feed the young. (Canon 300mm f2.8 lens set at 1/250th at f8.0 on Fujichrome 50 professional film.)



7 photo by Tim Wright



8 photo by Tim Wright

Photo 9

After a hard day, the female sat next to my blind and tried to catch some ZZZ's. It was quite a sight to watch her nod off, head slowly falling either forward or backward, and suddenly waking before she fell off the pipe. (Canon 500mm f4.5 lens set at 1/125th at f5.6)

9



Photo 7

The green headband and T-shirt was a combination Tim found too comical to pass up, so he asked me to hold still for a photo. He calls this my "Rambo" pose, but please don't think I always look like this. This is the second blind, where we used two strobes to photograph osprey on their nest at sunset. We placed our blind so the sun would appear to set behind our subjects and then used fill flash to compensate for exposure differences between the background and the foreground. The strobes, Norman 200Bs', one of which can be seen on the top left of this photo, had to be put up and taken down every day due to high winds and occasional storms. After trying for two months on this one shot, we never got a photograph we liked. Either the sun refused to set in a blaze of glory, the birds weren't positioned properly or for some odd reason the strobes wouldn't fire. After hours of waiting, once the sun starts its final colorful descent, you only have a few minutes to shoot and everything had better be in its proper place or you won't get the shot.

Photo 8

Working 15-hour days, it was not uncommon practice to catch naps during a lull in the action. After a meal, the young ospreys would settle in for a snooze while the female stood watch. Water lapping against pilings below, a convenient camera angle and air mattresses made this a relaxing break in the day for photographers as well.

Photo 10

As the sun went down and lights from the nearby pier came on, I climbed out of my blind to try an experiment.

I wanted a dark blue evening sky background but haze in the air robbed the sky of its color. So, I chose to shoot with Kodak's Tungsten 50 slide film. Tungsten film is balanced for incandescent light not sunlight. In other words, tungsten film is designed to look "natural" when shot indoors by the light of incandescent bulbs. In daylight, tungsten film renders everything a deep blue. Since I wanted my sky blue but didn't want my subjects blue, I covered the front of my flash with a CTO orange gel. This colored gel changes the light of the flash to orange and matches the color balance of the tungsten film. Whatever my flash lit up appeared as natural light while the background became a deep blue. (Canon T90 camera, 24mm lens, 1/20 or 1/30th sec at f8.0 with a Vivitar 283 flash.)

Photo 11

Photography always took back seat to a mission of mercy. On two occasions, we rescued fledgling ospreys from the river near our blinds. The first time, both 8-week-old fledglings on a nest flew as we approached. For some reason, one crash-landed about 100 yards out into the river. Tim and I realized that the current was carrying the young bird toward the pier, so we untied our tree branch prop from the blind and used it to try to rescue the bird. Holding the rope, we dropped the sturdy limb into the water and tried to get the osprey to grab it, but the current was too strong and the fledgling drifted under the pier. Tim pulled off his shirt and climbed below. Dodging

barnacles and osprey talons, he managed to get the bird perched on a cross beam.

Now, sitting so close to the water, the inexperienced bird had no room to take off from its new perch, and rising water was also a threat to its safety. We had to capture it.

I climbed down to help, but it was another 15 minutes or so before I had its cold, soggy body in my arms. Bird tucked under one arm, I only had the other arm to pull me to safety, but slippery wood beams prevented my one-armed departure. Tim climbed up, ran to our car and produced a knapsack which he lowered to me on a rope. I stuffed the bird in, head first, and Tim pulled it up through an opening in the pier. As soon as I got up, we marched the osprey back to its nest and released it on the dock below the nest. (At this nest site you couldn't climb up to the nest, and we didn't have a ladder.) By then, the entire pier's osprey population was in an uproar, so we grabbed our equipment and left. The next day, the fledgling was back on the nest, apparently none the worse for wear.



10



11



12

“You need lots of help from lots of people—and even then—It’s still a lot of work.”

The second rescue involved an osprey of unknown origin that my sister and I spotted drifting toward the pier one day. Stephanie, a trained EMT and member of the Blue Ridge Mountain Search and Rescue Group, lassooed the sinking bird with a spare rope and hoisted it up to where we stood. The fledgling was weak and bleeding, having apparently been chewed on by something. Bird in hand, we turned right around and drove back to Richmond, placing the bird in the capable hands of wildlife rehabilitator Lisa Sisk. Ultimately, the bird recovered at the Wildlife Center in Weyers Cave, but could not be released because it never had the opportunity to learn how to fish from its parents. With the help of Eastern Airlines, the bird got a free ride to the Audubon Society Wildlife Center in Maitland, Florida near Orlando where the bird “learned to fish” and was later released.

Photo 12

By August, the 6-week-old fledglings were so large that they crowded the female out of the nest. When she tried to shield them from the scorching rays of the sun, they nearly knocked her into the water. (Canon 500mm f4.5 lens set at 1/250th at f5.6 using Fujichrome 50 professional film.)

I would like to thank Dr. Mitchell Byrd, Conservation Ranger Walt Feurer, Captain Karl Kowalski, husband Tim Wright and all the others for their support and enthusiasm in helping me with this project. Wildlife photography always takes patience, persistence—and usually the help of many people. □

Lynda Richardson is a professional wildlife photographer whose work appears in National Geographic, National Wildlife, International Wildlife, Natural History, U.S. News & World Report, and many other publications.



Fleeing the Storm



W GALLERY



Lee Baskerville; photo by Pels

Lee Baskerville's father, Henry, tells a story about the first time his son met commercial artist and Richmond resident Jack Woodson. Jack greeted the then nine-year-old boy, and graciously started in on an elementary recital about what it takes to be an artist. Finally, he asked Lee if he had brought along any work with him, and Henry went out to the car and brought an armload in, laying it out carefully for Jack to view. Jack silently looked from one piece to another and back again. He looked up. "Did you do all these, Lee?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

Jack sprang up from his chair and grabbed Lee in a bear hug. "Finally!" he shouted. "Finally, an *artist!*"

Eighteen-year-old Lee Baskerville is indeed an artist. The white-tailed buck acrylic painting, "Fleeing the Storm" was completed when Lee was 12. Today, Lee has sold more than 100 original pieces of art, and has two prints available for sale.

His parents insist that Lee started to paint before he could talk. All in the interest of art, Lee relates how "Dad brought home charcoal and art books of nudes for me to draw from when I was 5 years old." Lee pauses and grins. "My friends all loved it." But the books didn't last long. "By the time I was six," Lee smiles, "I saw more animals than I did nudes. So I thought I'd start concentrating on animals." The fact that his father is president of Safaris Unlimited, a company that organizes safaris and guides sportsmen all over the world, put Lee in a position to hunt big game and to gain the visual experiences that would find their way into his art.

"You have to experience an animal in its natural habitat if you want to paint it successfully," insists Lee. "The technical accuracy must be there, but you have to experience the animal in the wild to get the emotion right in the brush technique."

The thoughtful young man paused. "It's basically visually poetry."

An oil and watercolor of a South African cape buffalo hangs on the wall going up the stairs to Lee's studio in the attic of his family's home in Richmond. "See that?" says Lee, pointing at the bold red paint shadowing the buffalo's hindquarters. "Most people don't *see* the red. But, what I'm trying to do here is to convey an emotion—the wildness and the power I felt watching that animal. If art doesn't make you feel a certain way, you might as well just be recording facts on canvas."

Still, though Lee draws from his experience for the composition and

spirit of his work, he keeps a collection of books on wildlife nearby for reference. "I use photographs a lot," says Lee. "But I don't copy from them. I use them to check the angle of a leg, its ears, horns. I want to make sure that a muscle or shadow is accurate. Most people wouldn't notice that, especially in the kind of impressionistic work I do, but those who have *seen* the animals in the wild would. And that's important to me."

Lee talks not from classroom lectures or books on art. He has never had formal art lessons. He talks from the experience of his art, and from the knowledge he has gained from sitting at the feet of, or listening on the phone to artists he admires.

"You know, it's strange," says Lee, "but I'll not have painted in six or eight months because of school, even though I'll be thinking the whole time about it, occasionally making sketches. Then, the next time I pick up a paint brush, I'll notice my techniques have developed and improved. I'll be able to do things I couldn't do the year before."

At 18 years old, the story of the artist Lee Baskerville is just beginning. But it's a tale of an evolving young artist unencumbered by the regime of art schools or art courses. Lee Baskerville is going to UVA this fall. To study art? You've got to be kidding . . .

For more information on obtaining prints and original art from Lee Baskerville, write to him at 67 DeHaven Dr., Richmond, VA 23233. □



photo by Garry Walter

Trophy Tales

by Bill Cochran

Since the mid-1980s, hunters have been bagging more than 100,000 deer annually in Virginia. A modest, yet significant, number of them carry gleaming antlers that tower skyward, the kind that can send a sportsman trotting to the taxidermy shop. Every big buck is a big story, no matter if it makes the local newspaper or simply is remembered around the campfire of a handful of hunting buddies. It is high drama, a tale of hard work, of perseverance, of skill, of generous doses of good luck and maybe a prayer thrown in.

Some sportsmen are trophy hunters by design. They have advanced beyond the point when they pull the trigger on a fat four or six-pointer. They hold out for the big boy, confident he may be the very next deer in their sights. Others, the majority, have less lofty ambitions when they go afield, but beating in the chest of most is a heart that says "Maybe I'll get lucky this time."

Virginia is a good place for a white-tailed deer hunter to get lucky. Every year that fact is underscored when sportsmen from across the state tote their trophies to the Virginia Big Game Contest. The ink hardly gets a chance to dry in the record book before changes must be recorded. Even though this is the 51st year of scoring bucks in Virginia, few of the champions in the record book are the product of antiquity. The fact is, nearly 50 percent of those ranking in the prestigious top 12 are products of the past half-dozen seasons. Included is the all-time champ, a 22-pointer taken during the 1987-88 season in Wise County by Edison Holcomb of Pound. For Virginia deer hunters, these are the good old days, and the best may yet to be!

There have been back-to-back years of above average mast crops. This has kept the deer in good nutritional shape, sending them into the springtime antler-growing period with the luxury of exerting their energies on rack development. Plus, growing numbers of landowners and hunting clubs are putting emphasis on manag-

ing their property with big deer in mind, through the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' Deer Management Assistance Program, succinctly known as DMAP.

The origin of Virginia's big game trophy competition goes back to 1939, when the newly formed Virginia Peninsula Sportsman's Association decided to have a deer contest. That year, the antlers were judged by appearance rather than measurement. The judge simply looked at the heads and decided this is first, this is second, this is third. The winner was easy to discern, an imposing Surry County buck killed by J. Thomas Barclay of Newport News. A painting of the buck by Barclay Sheaks is on the 1990 Virginia National Forest Stamp and is available as a limited edition print in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the contest.

As the Virginia Big Game Contest celebrates its 50th year anniversary of scoring the biggest trophies in Virginia, Bill Cochran records the tales of the biggest trophies ever taken in Virginia.

By 1946, a scoring system had been devised, the product of George Johnson, a trophy hunter and outdoor writer from Newport News. The system measures the length plus the circumference of the beams between each prong. There is a bonus when the tips of the two main antlers are close. Racks that score the highest are those with heavy beams that curve out wide and then back together at the tips.

At that time, Boone and Crockett, the national scoring program, was ranking deer on the length of the longest beam. Johnson saw that as only a little improvement over judging to suit the eye. His method became known as the Virginia Scoring System, which is used today in the state contest. It differs from the

present Boone and Crockett system, which was tried for the first time in 1950. This makes Virginia's big game contest one of the oldest—many believe the oldest—championship to use a modern measurement system. Unlike Boone and Crockett, it recognizes no difference between typical and non-typical heads; instead, ranking them together. Since it involves more individual measurement, a buck scores higher under the Virginia system. While the results of two measuring systems can be confusing, backers of the Virginia method say it has been used with excellent success longer than any other and they see no reason to change it.

By the late 1940s, Virginia's contest was a statewide affair, and endorsed by the Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries as the official championship. It was divided into eastern and western competitions, with the Virginia Peninsula Sportsman's Association handling trophies taken east of the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Rockingham-Harrisonburg Chapter of the Izaak Walton League sponsoring the western event. The two groups alternate sponsorship of the state finals each year. Through the seasons, the contest was expanded to judge bear and turkey and to award citations for deer heads that meet certain standards. While there are numerous trophy buck competitions across the state today, this one has maintained its official status. It is the only route to getting a buck into the state record book.

Where to find such a buck?

A study of the records reveal that the eastern and western sections of the state are equal contributors. The fact that Edison Holcomb bagged the state champion in Wise County is a revelation that there are very few places in Virginia lacking trophy hunting potential. Twenty years ago, Wise reported an annual kill of only 16 deer. Stockings from the Radford Army Ammunition Plant, known for its trophy animals, along with tighter regulations have turned a sagging herd into trophyland.



Top: Spectators crowded in to view the trophy bucks on display last year during the Eastern and State competitions in Williamsburg. Above: Edison Holcomb of Pound, VA, with the all-time Virginia record buck taken during the 1987 season in Wise County; photos by Bill Cochran.

Actually, anyplace in the state can be "trophyland," where food is abundant for deer and herds are in balance with that food supply. Add to that good antler-growing genes, then give the bucks an opportunity to mature 3½ or so years, and you have trophy hunting for sure. Big bucks often are found along the fringes of farm or timberland, where hunting pressure is limited through private ownership, or they are located in remote, nearly inaccessible, pockets on public lands.

Almost one-quarter of Virginia's top record-book bucks—including No. 1 and No. 2—were taken the final day of the season. This partly is due to a late-season flurry of heavy hunting pressure. Also it is a tribute to the sheer persistence of good hunters. A trophy hunter is one who expects to kill a fine deer and refuses to quit until he succeeds or the season ends.

Even so, few contest winners over the past 50 years have failed to acknowledge that luck played a role in their success. The statement, "I was in the right place at the right time" is voiced with frequency and honesty.

The Eastern Region competition for the 1990 contest is September 8-9 at Bruton High School in Williamsburg. The Western Region contest and State Championship is September 21-22 at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds in Harrisonburg.

The number of categories has been expanded this season in an effort to recognize bucks that are outstanding trophies but lack the number of points to compete in the top category. The new arrangement gives nine to 11-point bucks their own category, so a rack of that size doesn't have to compete with a 20-pointer. Bow-killed bucks, once all thrown into a single category, now have classes for 12 points and above; nine to 11 points, seven and eight points and six points and under, the same as gun-killed deer.

No. 1 Buck

Hunter: Edison Holcomb, Pound County: Wise
Season: 1987-88
Points: 22
Virginia Score: 272 10/16

Edison Holcomb had been hunting a grown-over Wise County field along the edge of a timbered ridge, planting his back daily against a poplar tree while keeping a diligent, one-man vigil. Time was running out for the 39-year-old coal miner. It was the final day of the two-week western deer season. He had seen nothing but slick-headed does.

On the eve of the season's last day, some friends had called, urging him to go to Giles County. At least there he'd have a chance to kill a doe, they said. In Wise County, there is a bucks or nothing law.

Holcomb held out. There was a time when he and other hunters in the southwest Virginia coal fields had no choice but to travel several counties eastward to hunt deer. But deer restoration efforts in his home county were taking root. He told his buddies that he'd simply get into his old Chevy truck one more morning and drive a mile or so from home to look for a buck. Giving him hope, as the season ebbed, was a massive buck scrape near the poplar tree.

The morning was clear and cool enough for deer to move well, but not uncomfortably cold for a sinewy hunter like Holcomb. A breeze was hitting his face. A few raucous crows called in the distance. Holcomb enjoyed the sun when it topped the ridges and began to bring warmth and detail to the brushy field he watched.

About 8:30, he spotted the buck, 100 yards in the distance. Holcomb endured 10 agonizing minutes as it weaved through the brush, its nose to the ground, obviously in pursuit of a doe.

"He sounded like a bulldozer without an engine coming through



Top: Peter Crocker bagged the No. 2 record buck taken during the 1962-63 season in Isle of Wight County. With the trophy is Charles Rogers, executive director of the Virginia Peninsula Sportsmen's Association. Above: James Shumaker holds the No. 3 record book buck, taking it during the 1986-87 season in Buckingham County; photos by Bill Cochran.

the thicket," Holcomb said. "He walked right up to me and threw his head up in the air and stood and looked right straight at me."

Holcomb put the 3X-Weaver scope of his familiar Marlin .30-30 on the lower part of the animal's broad neck and squeezed the trigger. The deer simply sank to the ground. Then Holcomb began counting points.

"I counted about four or five times, I guess. I counted 28. That is what I kept coming up with."

Later, official scorers counted 22 that measured an inch or more. It was the biggest buck they'd ever measured, unseating a deer that had ranked supreme in the record book for 25 years.

No. 2 Buck

Hunter: Peter Crocker, Jr., Windsor County: Isle of Wight
Season: 1962-63
Points: 27
Virginia Score: 271 15/16

"I heard the dogs coming," Peter Crocker vividly recalls of the day he got his big buck, nearly 30 years ago. "As a matter of fact, dogs were coming on both sides of me. I happened to look behind me and I could see this big buck coming."

It was the final day of the seven-week eastern season. Crocker, a peanut farmer, was on an organized hunt, a member of the Isle of Wight Hunt Club. He had taken a stand and was waiting for drivers and dogs to dislodge deer from the lowland thickets. Crocker gripped his gun tightly and took cover when he spotted the sleek buck running his way, its hooves cutting the black soil and clicking on the rocks.

"As soon as I found out it was a buck, I got down behind a stump until the deer got close enough for me to shoot. I raised up and shot, and as soon as I realized how big the deer was, I got excited. I'd never seen one like him before."

Nor had anyone else in Virginia. The buck's main beams were as thick

as a working man's wrist. The rack had a 30-inch spread. The fact that the animal was comparatively small-bodied, weighing 158 pounds, accentuated the enormity of its antlers.

At the state big game contest, the judges counted 26 measurable points. They scored the trophy 267 7/16. That made it No. 1 in the record book. No other buck even was close. It dominated the standings at that mark for more than 20 years.

In 1985, Crocker was invited to bring his mounted trophy to the big game show in Newport News as a crowd attractor. The hundreds of show visitors weren't the only ones who took a special interest in it. So did the judges. They checked the original score sheet and noted some discrepancies. The antlers were re-measured. This time, 27 points were counted. The score jumped to 271 15/16. Awesome. Some pretty knowledgeable hunters said there'd never be a deer big enough to unseat it, but Crocker didn't rule out that possibility. For 25 years, it stood the test.

No. 3 Buck

Hunter: James Shumaker,
New Canton
County: Buckingham
Season: 1986-87
Points: 38
Virginia Score: 270 14/16

James Shumaker had been turkey hunting that morning. When he returned home he found his son, Lonnie, installing a CB in his pickup. For several weeks, Lonnie had been seeing a big buck on a neighbor's farm. The sightings had occurred at night, when he rounded a curve and the lights from his truck shined into a field.

Once the CB work was finished, Lonnie and his dad decided to take a couple of young hounds over to the neighbor's farm to see if they would run anything. Even though Buckingham County is in the heart of Virginia's hound country, here running deer with dogs is a time-honored tra-

dition, James is quick to tell you that his first love is turkey hunting. But when you have sons who are crazy over deer hunting, you go with them.

"So we went down to the neighbor's who has, I guess, about 30 acres of land. Lonnie took the dogs to a creek and I went down the neighbor's road and got off into the woods."

James hadn't been there long when he heard Lonnie shout. The puppies barked a couple of times, then James spotted a buck coming his way. He dropped it with a neck shot.

"The first thing I saw were horns. I had killed some big deer, but nothing like that one. My boy went wild. 'That's the one I have been seeing!' he said. 'You done killed my deer!'"

James and Lonnie had the buck back home by 10:30 a.m. Until 9 that night, the driveway was filled with people coming to see the huge trophy.

"I never had anything that caused as much commotion in my life," said James. "One lady came by and saw it and drove to Richmond—about 60 miles away—to get film for her camera. People just flocked to it."

The trophy lacked only 1 1/16 inch of matching Peter Crocker's buck, the all-time record at the time. It actually out-scored Crocker's buck in the non-typical Boone and Crockett rankings. James is quick to admit that his success had been a simple case of being in the right place at the right time.

No. 4 Buck

Hunter: Guy Estes, Jr., Goodview
County: Bedford
Season: 1986-87
Points: 19
Virginia Score: 260 15/16

Onion Mountain is a rugged chunk of Bedford County that sweeps off the high country of the Blue Ridge Parkway into rolling foothills that nurture apple orchards and green pastures. The area long has been a producer of big bucks, with its abundance of food and the kind of remoteness and cover that gives whitetails a chance to mature and let

their good genes go to work growing wall-hanging antlers.

It is a favorite bow and gun hunting spot for Guy Estes, giving him an opportunity to pursue his theory: Look for the best bucks in the most remote settings.

So, opening day of the deer season he headed into the thickest clump of cover he could locate on the mountain and climbed into a tree stand. He figured the dominant buck of the region would head there, too, once the guns of autumn began sounding in the lowlands.

Estes got there at dawn and perched in his tree stand for 7½ hours. It was like being banished to solitary confinement as he kept watch over a plot the size of a city backyard. There were no scenic vistas to entertain him. What kept him glued there was a single buck scrape.

Five o'clock came, and long shadows rapidly were stretching across the mountainside. Estes knew in a matter of minutes it would be time to unload his .30-06 and head for home. That's when he heard the buck.

"He was coming from the brush below me. I could look down out of my tree stand and see his feet. When you have seen enough deer, you can tell a buck from a doe by the way they walk. I knew he was a buck.

"When he got within 20 to 25 yards of me, I just held on his neck and pulled the trigger. I didn't realize how big he was until after he fell."

Estes won the western division of the big game contest with his 19-point buck. No one else was close. His friend told him he was a shoo-in to take the state title a couple of weeks later. Even his hometown newspaper said it was in the bag. After all, the score was second only to the top buck in the record book at the time. But the state competition that year happened to be the time James Shumaker showed up with his huge Buckingham County buck. Two record-book animals in a single season! □

Bill Cochran, outdoor editor of the Roanoke Times and World-News, has been covering Virginia's big game competition for more than 25 years.



Guy Estes proudly displays his No. 4 record buck taken in Bedford County in 1986; photo by Bill Cochran.

Keepers of the Flame

The Brotherhood of the Jungle Cock is dedicated to passing the joy and ethics of angling to the next generation.

story & photo by
Harry Gilliam

In Thurmont, Maryland on the banks of Big Hunting Creek stands a statue of a man kneeling to bait the hook for a youthful angler. Created by William Westcott, the bronze memorial is a national monument to The Brotherhood of the Jungle Cock, a group dedicated to passing on the skills and creed of angling to younger generations.

Founded 52 years ago by the late outdoor writer and former Richmond resident Joe Brooks and some of his writer cronies, the group has influenced thousands of young anglers. In casting about for a name, Joe, along with fellow writers Ham Brown and Frank Bentz decided to name the group for the waxy neck feather of the Jungle Cock, an Asian ancestor of the domestic chicken, which is highly prized by fly tyers. Since this humble beginning, chapters have been formed in Virginia, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Michigan.

Every year, each adult member invites at least one youth 8 years or older, and personally escorts them through a day's education, fishing and ceremonial activities. Forty-four members and their guests participated in this year's late May outing in Virginia. Nat Burgwyn is one of the original members of Virginia Anglers Club Chapter of the Brotherhood. "Making arrangements for one of these events is very complicated," he said. "But when you see the enthusiasm of the youngsters, it is well worth the trouble." As 86-year old Frank



Faces beaming with pride, this year's Jungle Cock Society's young guests anxiously watch the scales as weighmaster Taylor Turner evaluates their catch.

Smoot, president of the Maryland Chapter and time-honored elder of the group said: "Young people who fish seldom get into trouble with drugs or alcohol."

Friday night kicked off the festivities at the Christopher Run Campground on the shores of Lake Anna with seminars conducted by the members on fly fishing and fly tying. On Saturday morning with freshly-tied flies in hand, the kids brushed up on the art of casting under the guidance of members Glen Carter and Burgwyn. Then, with the dry runs over, the kids hit the water. The dark clouds and cold winds of the night before had blown over and the sun was bright as the group scattered to boats and prime bank locations, looking for that lunker that might win them one of the great prizes the committee had secured from local businesses. These included tackle boxes, lures, lines and some fine fishing outfits.

By mid-afternoon the enthusiastic young anglers began drifting back in with fish on stringers, in buckets, and firmly clasped in young hands. This was the moment of truth, the "weigh-in," and each waited anxiously for the official pronouncement from weighmaster Taylor Turner, which turned out to be a 3½ lb. catfish. Instilling a respect for "catch and release," extra points were awarded to those young anglers who released their fish.


Despite the day of relaxed fun, The Brotherhood of the Jungle Cock has serious intentions. The creed of the Brotherhood, repeated by all in a solemn ceremony that evening, reminded them of their purpose: "... enjoying as we do, only a life estate in the out of doors, and morally charged in our time with the responsibility of handing it down unspoiled to tomorrow's inheritors, we individually undertake annually to take at least one boy a-fishing, instructing him, as best we know, in the responsibilities that are soon to be wholly his.

"Holding that moral law transcends the legal statutes, always beyond the needs of any one man, and holding that example alone is the one certain teacher, we pledge always to conduct ourselves in such fashion on the stream as to make safe for others the heritage which is ours and theirs."

There is no doubt that The Brotherhood of the Jungle Cock is passing on the best of its generation—its experience and its wisdom—to the future.

For more information on the Brotherhood, write to P.O. Box 29176, Richmond, VA 23229. □

Harry Gilliam is retired from the Game Department's Public Relations and Resource Education Division.



Takin' It Easy

photo by Cindie Brunner

In The Summertime

by Randall Shank

Looking for a place to take the kids during the heat of the summer with enough to keep the anglers in your family happy? Here's a look at five little pieces of heaven in Virginia.

Have the dog days of summer got you down? Imagine standing on the top of a mountain with a cool wind blowing in your face. Or, close your eyes and find yourself standing knee-deep in a cold mountain trout stream. Perhaps though, you would rather be floating effortlessly on a slow lazy river. Sounds good, you think? Then, why not just get up and go?

From the deep forests of the Appalachians, up the windswept

ridges of the Blue Ridge, to the tidal shores of our coastal rivers, there is a piece of Virginia wilderness waiting to be discovered by you and your family. You are only limited by your time and imagination as to where you can go. I would like to share five of my family's favorite places to go when we want to get outside and back to the basics. We take our tent, our walking shoes, enough food for the weekend and go. I invite you and your family to come along.

**Mt. Rogers National Recreation Area/
Grayson Highlands State Park**

Way out in the southwest part of the state, or just "over the next ridge" if you live in Grayson County, lies a section of territory that I was told 15 years ago would soon be discovered and overrun with people. "You better go now," a friend said.

Well, I am here to tell you that the rush of people to the Mt. Rogers National Recreation Area in Jeffer-

son National Forest has not yet happened. Go, now.

When you do, you will find a nice public campground that sits on the side of a mountain in Grayson Highlands State Park. There are several other campgrounds as well in the area. On our visit during the July 4th week, we had the campground to ourselves after the weekend campers had departed.

The area has many miles of back-country trails and shorter loop trails for the day hiker. A well-designed visitor center gives the first-time visitor a good introduction to the flora and fauna of the region. For the horse enthusiast, the park has established stables where one can trailer and then stable a horse in preparation for trail rides into the recreation area.

The Mt. Rogers National Recreation Area is made up of open meadows that are interspersed with a fir and spruce boreal forest. In Virginia there is nothing else quite like it. On our most recent visit, we spent our first night in the state park public campground. Before dinner we hiked a loop trail and took in the visitor center. The next day our family backpacked up to a meadow at the foot of Mt. Rogers, which at 5,729 feet is the highest point in Virginia. We followed the Appalachian Trail on part of the trip. We had the mountains to ourselves as we camped in a grove of trees near a mountain meadow. The next morning I awoke early, and hiked to a nearby rock outcropping. With a doe and a fawn grazing in the grasses below, the world was at my feet as I watched the sun rise.

Our time on the mountain passed quickly as the children explored the meadows and boulders and woods. The wind in the trees whistled in the background as we told stories by the campfire. At the end of our journey, it was hard to leave, hard to return back to the rush of everyday living.

If you go: The Mt. Rogers National Recreation Area stretches through five counties. Grayson Highlands State Park is located in Grayson County on Rt. 362 which is off Rt. 58, about 30 miles east of Damascus.



There are no reservations necessary. For the fisherman, there are several trout streams in the area. Check about the availability of drinking water on Mt. Rogers. We carried our own.

Rocky Knob Recreation Area

When I was 10 years old, I caught my first trout in Rock Castle Creek in Patrick County. I vividly remember that small rainbow, but I also remember the wild surroundings where that fish was caught. The creek is located in the scenic Rock Castle Gorge, which is a rugged five-mile stretch of mountain terrain which is part of the Rocky Knob Recreation Area on the southern Blue Ridge Parkway.

Rock Castle Creek begins as a small brook at the top of the Blue Ridge. With a steep drop in elevation it quickly starts to rush over boulders that are as big as houses. Frothing into deep green pools, the stream makes a steady course to the valley below. As the water tumbles and rolls down the mountain, it passes abandoned cabins and rock wall fen-

ces that were built by mountain people decades ago. One can feel the spirit of those who occupied the hollows in years gone by.

The deeper a person goes into the gorge, the further one escapes from the distractions of civilization. A grouse may startle you as it flushes from underneath some thick rhododendron. You may catch a glimpse of a wild turkey, a deer, a raccoon, or squirrel. Some of the tulip poplar trees in the gorge are over three feet in diameter. In the creek, there is an abundance of salamanders and crayfish. Trout are there for the catching as well. In the spring, the wildflowers grow profusely along the stream with the ground carpeted in trillium, Dutchman's breeches, and bloodroot.

There are three different access points into the gorge itself. The Rock Castle Gorge National Recreation Trail is a 10.6 loop trail that leads from the Rocky Knob campground down into the gorge. This is an all day hike with a very steep climb out. You



Left: Barefence Mountain in the Shenandoah National Park is a good place to watch the early fall hawk migration; photo by Randall Shank. Above: Take your kids outdoors this summer and the angler in you can have them catching crawdads in one of the many cool mountain streams in Virginia; photo by Jean M. Fogle.

can also take the old logging road from the Rocky Knob cabins down into the gorge, following the creek as you go. The other access point is from the dirt road that parallels the creek from where the creek crosses Rt. 8 a few miles west of the community of Woolwine.

A good base of operations to see the area is from the Rocky Knob campground which is located on the parkway in the area. Further south on the parkway is the Mabry Mill and its restaurant which probably serves some of the best buckwheat cakes in Virginia. On weekends, there may be local musicians playing bluegrass music near the mill.

Whether you choose to just sit at the top of Rocky Knob and enjoy the cool mountain breeze, or whether you wish to spend your time at Rock Castle Creek, your efforts will be rewarded. I know of no better place to get outside in the southern Blue Ridge Mountains than in the Rock Castle Gorge and the Rocky Knob area.

If you go: The Rocky Knob Recreation Area is located at milepost 169 on the Blue Ridge Parkway in Floyd County, about 50 miles south of Roanoke. There is a visitor center at the picnic grounds. The campground fills up on a first-come, first served basis.

Peaks of Otter/Apple Orchard Falls

There is a 1915 photo of my grandfather and grandmother sitting on the top of Sharp Top at the Peaks of Otter in Bedford County. In those days, groups of young people would take a horse and buggy up to the mountains to escape the summer heat.

The Peaks of Otter area in the central portion of the Blue Ridge has a lot to offer the outdoor enthusiast. To climb higher and higher, there is no better place than Sharp Top, which at an elevation of 3,875 feet towers over piedmont Virginia. The walk is a moderately strenuous climb to the top. At the foot of the mountain is a warm-water lake that is stocked with bass and panfish. Bor-

dering the lake on one side is a well-planned public campground operated by the National Park Service. For someone looking for more sophisticated accommodations, the Peaks of Otter Lodge and restaurant is located on the other side of the lake. The Park Service also has an exhibit on display that depicts mountain culture from years gone by.

To get away from the weekend crowds at the Peaks, though, one only has to go eight miles north on the Parkway. There you will find a trailhead that leads down to the headwaters of North Creek in the Jefferson National Forest. Following the trail will take you to a spectacular waterfall called Apple Orchard Falls. After a steep hike down, it is important to be extremely careful on the slippery rocks. The falls can be very dangerous if not approached with caution. Another route to the falls is by walking up from the end of the North Creek road.

One summer day while trout fishing in North Creek I was sitting on a rock when two young mink came frolicking down to the stream. They probed under rocks and sticks looking for something to eat as I watched them for several minutes before they meandered on down the mountain. Wildlife abounds in the area with deer, bear, grouse and other species living in the hemlock-lined hollows. The Appalachian Trail traverses the area and continues on the James River Face Wilderness Area a few miles further north.

If you go: The Peaks of Otter area is located about 15 miles east of Bedford off Rt. 43 and at milepost 86 on the Blue Ridge Parkway. The lower North Creek area can be reached off the Arcadia exit off of I-81 in Botetourt County. Follow the road up through the Jennings Creek area until you get to North Creek. Follow the North Creek road until it ends.

Shenandoah National Park

Further north along the Blue Ridge, the Blue Ridge Parkway stops at Afton Mountain. There, it becomes the Skyline Drive where it winds its way through Shenandoah National Park. Easily accessible to most of the

population in eastern and northern Virginia, the park is an enclave where one can get away from the heat of the city and enjoy the cool of a mountain stream or a fresh mountain breeze.

There are a wide variety of ways to enjoy the park, but the best way is to take at least a weekend getting to know the mountains on a little more intimate basis. Our family regularly spends several days a year in the park, with the public campgrounds as our home base. All of the campgrounds will be filled to capacity on weekends, so get there early. During the week the park is much less crowded.

The outdoor possibilities in the park are limitless. I can recommend four nice hikes for the family. Bearfence Mountain is an easy loop trail leading to the top of the mountain from the Parkway. The trail winds its way through an open rocky area at the crest that children will have a lot of fun climbing through. Once on the top you can spend the afternoon watching the fall hawk and Monarch butterfly migration.

Another ridgetop hike follows the Appalachian Trail to the Black Rocks areas. This is a short two-mile trip to a field of automobile-sized boulders that tower over the valley below. The trail goes further down a ridge, or one can stay on the Appalachian Trail and walk for miles. As in most areas of the park, wildlife abounds. Deer will surely be seen and there is always the chance of seeing a bear.

For the trout fisherman, a day-long hike to Big Run can be most rewarding. The hike in is easy, but the hike out is tough. Big Run sits on the western edge of the park and the trailhead is near the Loft Mountain Campground.

Near the Big Meadows Campground one can follow a trail down to the Rapidan River to Hoover Camp. This area borders the Game Department's Rapidan Wildlife Management Area. Hoover Camp is the place where Presidents Hoover and Carter liked to fish. They both used the facility as a base camp in their pursuit of the brook trout found in the Rapidan. The stream is managed fish-for-fun and requires single barb-



To satisfy your urge to climb to great heights this summer, try the Peaks of Otter in the Blue Ridge; photo by Cindie Brunner.

less hooks. All fish must be returned unharmed.

For more information on Shenandoah National Park, contact the National Park Service at Rt. 4, Box 348, Luray, Virginia 22835.

Tidewater Rivers

Head east with me now, away from the mountains to the flat land of tidewater Virginia. At least once a year, some friends and our kids get our boats, camping gear, and fishing rods, and spend the weekend on the river. In our case, the river is the Mattaponi, but it could be any river in coastal Virginia—the James, the York, the Rappahannock, the Pamunkey, the Chickahominy or another one.

With permission from the landowner ahead of time, we reach our camping site on Saturday morning. With our tents at the water's edge, we immerse ourselves in all the river has to offer until we must leave 36 hours later on a late Sunday afternoon. As time wears on, the river will change with the tides. Some of us spend the day fishing with nightcrawlers for small spot. Others try to sneak close to an egret that is feeding in the shallows of the river. Some of the kids look on the gravel bars for Indian arrow points, pieces of Indian pottery, and pieces of colonial glass—all remnants of the people who like us,

camped on these same shores.

With the departure of the day boat traffic, the evening becomes quiet and the river is still. I set out a trotline baited with cut fish, hoping to catch a catfish for breakfast. Around the campfire, we drink hot chocolate and eat hot dogs cooked on the fire. One of the kids points to a group of mallards that glides effortlessly up the river as darkness falls. Gradually, we each go into our tent or sleep under the stars with only the sound of the river lapping at the shore. The next morning we awake to fresh catfish cooking on the black iron skillet, looking forward to another day on the river before we must go home.

If you go: Virginia has miles of river shoreline. All you need is a canoe, jon boat, or larger craft for bigger water. On private property, be sure to get permission from the landowner to use his land. There are also numerous public campgrounds located on our rivers' shores.

There is no better place to go in Virginia during the summer than the outdoors. The mountains are naturally cool and the rivers are refreshing. Don't hesitate, don't wait, just go! You and your family will be glad you did. □

Randall Shank is the Chesapeake Bay Education Coordinator with the Division of Soil and Water Conservation.

1990 Virginia Big Game Contest

The 51st annual Virginia Big Game Contest will be held this year in September. The Western Regional and State Contest will be held on September 21 and 22 at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds in Harrisonburg, located on U.S. 11, 1.6 miles south of exit 62 off I-81. The Eastern Regional Contest will be held on September 8 and 9 at Bruton High School, 185 Rochambeau Drive in Williamsburg.

Sponsored by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, the Virginia Peninsula Sportsmen's Association, Inc., and the Rockingham-Harrisonburg Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America, this event will judge trophy white-tailed deer, black bear, and wild turkey legally taken during the 1989-90 hunting season. For Western Regional and State Contest entry information, contact Boyd E. Skelton, Executive Director, IWLA, 412 N. Main Street, Bridgewater, VA 22812, 703/828-3393. Contact Charles A. Rogers, Virginia Peninsula Sportsmen's Association, P.O. Box 1933, Newport News, VA 23601, 804/220-3711 or Robert L. Faison at 804/357-7834 for the Eastern Regional entry information. □

State Record Brown Trout Approved

The State Record Fish Committee of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries has unanimously approved a new state record brown trout. The 14 lb, 12.8 oz brown trout was caught by Mike Perkins of Bland out of the South Fork Holston River on May 24, 1990. It was caught on a Joe Fly using only 4 pound line. The

fish measured 30.6 inches and had a girth of 17 3/4 inches.

The previous record was held by Daniel Dempsey and was set in July, 1985 with a 12 lb, 13 oz fish taken out of the Middle Fork Holston River. Neither exceeds the historic record of 18 lb, 11 oz by William Nease taken out of the Smith River in June 1979. □

1990-91 Sportsman's Calendar Available

The new 1990-91 Sportman's Calendar produced by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries is now off the press! Running from September 1990 through August 1991, this calendar is perfect for the sportsman, fisherman, and any lover of the outdoors. The calendar is full of information that you need, including the best times to hunt and fish, when the sun rises and sets, moon phases, and other tidbits of natural history, like when the robins migrate and when the woodcock are expected back in the fall.

This full-color, award-winning calendar is now available for \$5! Just send us a check made out to the Treasurer of Virginia, and send it to: Sportsman's Calendar, Virginia Game Department, 4010 West Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23230-1104, or use the handy order form in this magazine. Please don't send cash, and please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery. □

White-tailed Deer Seminar Scheduled

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and the Virginia Deer Hunters Association are sponsoring a free, open-to-the-public

seminar on quality white-tailed deer management and muzzleloading in Richmond on Saturday, September 15 at 9:00 a.m. at the Holiday Inn—Midtown, 3200 West Broad Street.

The featured speaker of the seminar will be Dr. Harry A. Jacobson, a professor of wildlife management at Mississippi State University and nationally known for his work with white-tailed deer.

Jim Smith, vice-president of Thompson/Center Arms Company, Inc. will speak on the differences between hunting with a muzzleloader and a modern firearm, and the program will conclude with a panel discussion giving sportsmen an opportunity to ask questions about quality deer management.

Get there early to reserve your seat! □

GALLERY

VW Gallery Seeking Artists

Virginia Wildlife is seeking undiscovered wildlife artists to feature in our "VW Gallery." We are looking for high-quality wildlife and scenic art featuring species indigenous to Virginia to profile in the magazine. We prefer to receive color transparencies in a format larger than 35mm. Any art submitted for selection must be in a horizontal format, and the staff of *Virginia Wildlife* reserves the right to select art for publication based on its high quality and excellence.

We're looking forward to hearing from you! Send your submissions to: Emily Pels, Art Director, *Virginia Wildlife*, 4010 W. Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23230-1104. □

Unique Beaks

by Spike Knuth

The world of birds is a fascinating place. Their instincts and habits are a constant source of wonder. Their colors, migrations and the way they build their nests provide an almost unbelievable array of variety. Among the most interesting facts about birds are their bills and how they use them for feeding.

One of the most unusual "beaks" and the way it is used belongs to the black skimmer. The skimmer or "sea dog" (because its call sounds somewhat like a barking dog), is a bird of Virginia's coasts and tidal creeks. It is unusual because its lower mandible is longer than the upper. To feed, it skims low over the water with its lower mandible plowing or skimming the surface, catching small fish or crustaceans. When it catches a fish, its head snaps down under its breast, facing backward to absorb the shock. One would think it might break its neck, but as it gobbles up its catch, it again brings its head forward and continues on resuming its low-flying search for food.

Scientists have noted a series of fine lines or ridges angling forward on the bird's lower mandibles. These are perceived to be highly sensitive nerves or sensors that reveal to the bird just how deep into the water it is probing. The lower mandible also grows continually to make up for wear caused by constant use in the salt water. From the side the bill looks thick and ungainly, but from the front it is almost knife-like so it can cut the water.

Skimmers will feed mainly in the calmer tidal creeks and marshes, or on the inside waters of barrier islands, but they will "skim" in some fairly choppy waters as well. Boaters and fishermen running through a creek at medium speed will notice skimmers occasionally feeding at the trailing



Ruby-throated hummingbird; photo by Maslowski

edge of the wake for food stirred up by the boat.

Another bird with an unusual, or "unique beak," is the American woodcock. The woodcock is a member of the sandpiper family, but it lives in the moist bottoms of the uplands. A nocturnal feeder, it has a strong liking for earthworms. To catch its favored food, it inserts its long bill into the ground when it detects a worm. The upper mandible of its bill is flexible at the tip and can be flexed somewhat like a finger. It finds the worm by probing, feels it and opens the tip, pinching and catching the worm.

One bird that looks like it may have been in an accident, or that a cruel joke was played on it, or that it is deformed in some way is the crossbill. There are two types of crossbills, both of which live high in the coniferous forests, coming to Virginia mainly during the winter months.

The crossbill's mandibles are crossed. It will stick its beak into the

pine cone scale and when it opens its bill, the pine cone scales are pried open. Its finely-barbed tongue darts out and hooks the pine seed and pulls it out to be crushed by the thicker base of the bill and eaten.

Waterfowl have a variety of bills too. Some are mainly for surface feeding, others for eating mollusks and still others for grazing or rooting. The shoveler is a duck with a wide spoon-like bill fitted with strainers called lamellae. Often called "spoon-bills," the shovelers feed in small, circular groups, spinning, turning and paddling to stir up the bottom mud. They then quickly gobble up the suspended particles, sifting out the non-food items.

These are only a few of the interesting bills and feeding habits. Mergansers have long, narrow bills with saw-like or serrated edges which enable them to catch and hold fish. The ruddy turnstone uses its slightly upturned bill to pry up stones, and turn them over to get at the little aquatic creatures hiding under them. The nighthawk has a very wide mouth surrounded by hair-like feathers which enables it to catch insects on the wing. Woodpeckers have straight, strong, chisel-like bills along with special brain cushioning so they can dig into wood with force. The ruby-throated hummingbird sips nectar through its long, thin bill that can probe deep into tube-type flowers. Finches, grosbeaks and cardinals have large conical bills which are ideal for cracking and crushing seeds.

There are many other bill types, each designed perfectly for their uses. Bear in mind that each of the species mentioned have other physical attributes, traits, or characteristics which work in concert with their unique beaks in their quest for food for themselves and their young. □

Pokeweed

by Nancy Hugo

Pokeweed is a bodacious weed. A Northerner might just call it big, but here in the South we know pokeweed is remarkable not just for its size but for its tenacity, its vigor, and its habit. A big plant grows to be 12' tall, a bodacious one does it overnight.

According to the naturalist John Trott, pokeweed is the largest North American herbaceous plant. (A herbaceous plant is one that does not have persistent woody tissue; it dies down at the end of the growing season.) Not only can pokeweed grow to be 6-12' tall in a single season, it can sport leaves that are 12" long and stems that are 2" in diameter. Any gardener who tries to pull pokeweed out of the garden soon discovers that although pokeweed looks fleshy and yielding, its enormous root is almost impossible to dislodge. Even the seeds of pokeweed are persistent; they've been known to remain viable in the soil for over 100 years.

Roadsides, fields and waste places (anywhere where land has been disturbed) are pokeweed's typical habitats. My most persistent image of it is rising from the rubble of an old chimney near our cabin in Buckingham where its wine-red stems and hanging purple berries are as ornamental as those of any cultivated plant in the fall. Although almost all the other members of the Pokeweed family are tropical plants, *Phytolacca americana* (the pokeweed we all know) is native to North America and common in almost all of the eastern United States.

What child is not familiar with the ink-filled berries of pokeweed that are as useful for war paint as they are for writing secret messages? I still have trouble passing a pokeweed



Pokeweed; staff photo

plant without smushing a berry or two between my fingers just to see if the ink is as purple as I remember it. (It is.) I also have a special fondness for the color of pokeberry juice because it gave me the clue I once needed to rescue a mockingbird.

As you may know, birds—especially mourning doves, mockingbirds, bluebirds, flickers, downy woodpeckers and grosbeaks love pokeberries, but they have been known to get drunk on the ripe fruit. I know now—although I didn't know at the time—that the mockingbird that swooped down in front of my car one day might have been tipsy on pokeberries. I took the stunned (or injured?) bird home and wondered what I might feed him until it dawned on me there was a clue in his droppings. Purple—where had I seen that purple before?—in pokeberries! I fed the bird pokeberries and three days later watched him fly off strong as you please. Not even from Kitty

Hawk was there ever a more celebrated flight.

I'm told that you can freeze ripe pokeberries and serve them to birds on the bird feeder in winter. There are also culinary and medicinal uses of the plant, although Poison Control centers warn that all parts of the pokeweed plant are poisonous. It is the early greens that are often cooked and eaten as "poke sallet." If gathered in the spring before the pink color appears, the emerging shoots are said to be nutritious and delicious boiled and eaten like spinach or asparagus. Beware of eating the plant at the wrong stage of development, however. The folk remedy for poke poisoning is to "drink lots of vinegar and eat a pound of lard." That remedy plus warnings from my Poison Control center make me see pink in emerging poke shoots even when it may not be there.

Inkberry, Garget, Scape, Pokeberry, and Red Nightshade are all common names applied to Pokeweed. Some people also call pokeweed "Pigeonberry" from the days when it was a favorite food of the now extinct passenger pigeons. The name Poke reportedly derives from an Algonquin Indian word "pucon" which meant "plant used for staining or dyeing." Pokeberries are still used in dyeing. They were once also used to color cheap whisky which backwoodsmen called "port wine." The most innovative use of the plant may have been in the presidential campaign of 1844, however, when supporters of presidential candidate James K. Polk wore sprigs of pokeweed as a campaign symbol. Imagine the fun of using weeds as campaign symbols today—especially in a race between Bush and Wilder! □

Safety



Thunderstorms

by William Antozzi, Boating Safety Officer

photo by Herb Foster

In the summertime, the possibility of afternoon thunderstorms is a prediction often heard. Conditions are often just right on hot, muggy afternoons and it seems that thunderstorm forecasts occur just when people want to go swimming, boating or on a picnic.

Thunderstorms result from temperature imbalances. It is common knowledge that cold air is denser, heavier, and tends to descend, while warm air is less dense, lighter, and rises. When warm air rises, it cools as it gets into the upper atmosphere. Because it becomes cool, it sinks. Then down below it warms and again rises. Thus the air is rising and falling constantly on a warm summer day and the resulting instability of the air can result in thunderstorms.

Warm air holds more water vapor than cool air. When an updraft drives warm air into the upper atmosphere, the water vapor it contains condenses

into visible droplets and a cloud is formed. The cloud appears to be light and fluffy and is called "cumulus." The droplets in the cloud touch and combine into larger drops and when they become sufficiently heavy, fall as rain or hail.

When a cloud stretches high into the sky, it may reach 40,000 feet or more and may be several miles wide at its base. The cloud is then called "cumulonimbus" and high winds shred its top and blow it to one side so that the top takes on an "anvil" shape. Observers can learn to recognize that shape and be aware that it is a thunderhead.

On the water underneath the cloud, a strong cold downdraft may be felt along with rain or hail. As the violent updrafts and downdrafts occur, they are accompanied by lightning. Lightning is caused by the interaction of charged particles which produce an intense electrical field within clouds. The positive charge is

concentrated in the frozen upper layers of the cloud and the negative charge is in the lower portions. There is a positive charge on the earth below and lightning can go from cloud to cloud, cloud to earth or earth to cloud. Thunder is produced by explosive expansion of air heated by a lightning stroke.

It is necessary to observe the sky frequently to watch for darkening skies, towering thunderheads, lightning and increased winds. Boaters should turn to the NOAA weather channel for information or listen to lightning-produced static on an AM radio. When storms threaten, if practicable, a boater should go into a port and go ashore. If caught out in the open water far from shore, it will be necessary to ride out the storm, heading into the wind.

If a person is struck by lightning, and is not breathing, cardiopulmonary resuscitation should be started immediately. □

Recipes

Season Opening—Dove In The Oven

by Joan Cone

Of all upland game birds, probably none are tougher to shoot than doves. Tremendously fast and erratic fliers, they have reduced some gunners, who considered themselves good shots, into babbling wrecks!

Preparing these birds for good eating begins in the field. Dress them out as soon as possible and place in a cooler. You can snap out the breasts and cut off the wings with kitchen shears.

Since doves are small, they are best cooked quickly in a skillet or placed in a covered casserole and oven-baked. These methods prevent the meat from becoming too dry.

Menu:

Chutney Cheese Spread
Dove Casserole
Southern Corn Bread
Spinach/Mushroom Salad
Brandied Apple Cake

Chutney Cheese Spread

1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese
1/4 cup colonial chutney
1/4 cup finely chopped almonds
1/4 teaspoon curry powder
1/4 teaspoon dry mustard

Allow cheese to become room temperature. Combine all ingredients and mix well. Refrigerate until ready to use. Serve with assorted crackers. (Makes 1 1/4 cups)

Dove Casserole

12 doves or dove breasts
Salt and pepper
Flour
4 tablespoons butter or margarine
1 small onion, minced
2 carrots, chopped
1 tablespoon fresh parsley, chopped

1 cup chicken broth
1/2 cup white table wine

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. If birds are whole, split down back, and add salt and pepper to flour before dusting doves lightly. Melt butter in heavy skillet and place birds within it breast side down. Saute', turning frequently until browned on both sides. Remove birds from skillet and place in a casserole. Pour drippings from skillet over birds and add onion, carrots, parsley, chicken broth and wine. Cover and bake for 45 minutes or until birds are fork tender. Spoon wine gravy and vegetables over the birds when serving. (Allow 3 to 4 doves per person)

*Southern Corn Bread

1/3 cup flour
1 1/2 cups sifted cornmeal
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 eggs
1 cup buttermilk
2 cups milk
1 1/2 tablespoons butter

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Sift the flour, cornmeal, baking soda and salt into a mixing bowl. Beat the eggs until foamy and stir them into the dry mixture. Stir in the buttermilk and 1 cup of the milk. Heat the butter in a 9 x 2-inch black skillet and when it is very hot, but not brown, pour in the batter. Carefully pour the remaining 1 cup of milk on top of the batter without stirring. Place the skillet in the oven and bake 50 minutes, or until set and baked through. Slice into wedges. (Makes 8 servings)

*Recipe from *The New York Times Cook Book*; Revised Edition by Craig

Claiborne (Harper & Row, 1990)

Spinach/Mushroom Salad

4 slices bacon
1 package (10 ounces) fresh spinach, washed and trimmed
1/3 pound mushrooms, thinly sliced
1/4 cup vegetable oil
2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
1 tablespoon Dijon-style mustard
1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
dash of salt

Fry bacon until crisp, crumble and reserve. Combine spinach and mushrooms in a large serving bowl and refrigerate covered. Combine remaining ingredients in a glass jar with tight-fitting lid and shake. At serving time, pour dressing over salad and toss to coat. Sprinkle on reserved bacon. (Makes 6 servings)

Brandied Apple Cake

6 tablespoons brandy
4 cups peeled, chopped apples
2 cups flour
1 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons baking soda
2 teaspoons cinnamon
1 teaspoon nutmeg
1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
1 cup chopped walnuts
1 cup raisins
2 eggs
2 cups sugar
1/2 cup vegetable oil

Sprinkle brandy over apples and set aside. In a large bowl, combine flour, salt, soda, cinnamon, nutmeg and cloves. Stir in walnuts and raisins. Combine eggs, sugar and oil; beat well and blend into flour mixture. Stir in apples. Pour batter into a greased 13 x 9 x 2-inch pan. Bake in a preheated 375 degree oven for 35 minutes or until cake tests done. (Makes 12 servings) □

